

WANDERERS ARE ON TOP—BUT UNLUCKY AVENUE SUFFER!

By "Argus"

Wycombe Wanderers 3;

Walthamstow Avenue 1

AFTER a terrific effort in frying-pan heat Wycombe Wanderers went to the top of the Isthmian League on Saturday. To get back to the hot seat they occupied for so long last season, they had to slog themselves to a standstill against a very game Walthamstow side which seemed devoid of even a flicker of luck.

This was as fine a game as anyone had a right to expect in Turkish bath conditions. Wycombe won deservedly enough—the home forwards made goalkeeper Garry McGuire twist about his goal like a performing seal—but it was a thousand pities that Avenue had to loose the way they did.

Three slabs of fate made Walthamstow's players quit Loakes Park weary, despondent and cynical.

FOCAL-POINT

Waltham Cross referee Mr. R. J. Skinner was the focal point of two incidents which cost Avenue goals and made the visitors hopping mad. Even soccer-intellectual Jim Lewis, the most taciturn of players, was moved to eloquent protest.

The game was held up for more than two minutes in the first half when, with Wycombe a goal up, a Lewis shot appeared to tear into the back of the Wanderers net and out again, in the flash of an eyelid.

"No score" decided referee Skinner and Walthamstow forwards, looking as if they were going to take the matter to the United Nations, appealed unsuccessfully for justice.

Flash point number two came in the 55th minute when Mr. Skinner awarded Wycombe a penalty after John Beck's low centre had been "collected" by McGuire. Once again there were anguished protests. After the game the referee told me that one of the Walthamstow defenders had handled the ball to stop it from going into the net.

HOW UNLUCKY

Add these incidents to a Jim Lewis "scorcher" which whistled off the Wycombe crossbar and you can see just how unlucky the visitors were.

Even so, it was the Wanderers who had the glitter of League leaders. With wing halves Ron Fryer and Jimmy Truett back in fabulous form, Fryer particularly conjuring the ball into attack with all his old skill, and John Fisher pitting his wits successfully against Jim Lewis, the half back line looked the most impressive thing about the Wanderers.

Trying hard to shake off the "enigma" tag, Paul Bates was again the best of the home forwards, a deadly dribbler ever ready to pound in his best shot.

WELL ON TOP

Well on top in the first half hour the Wanderers might have had several goals. Bates, Atkins and Free hammering drives a whisker away from the target. Dashing Dennis Atkins schemed the best goal of the game, 10 minutes from the start, when he headed the ball past his full back in full flight and gave Cliff Trott the simplest of chances. Cliff gobbled it up!

Big Peter James again led the Wycombe line impressively and is rapidly catching up on the Isthmian League pace. He was always trying for a goal.

As Walthamstow improved, Brown came into action more and more and the disallowed "in-out" goal made things even more hectic in the Wycombe goal area. After Lewis had hit the crossbar, Free and Bates combined in a lovely movement, before Avenue romped back with Brown making a daring point-blank save from English.

On the stroke of half time Avenue equalised, Brian Harvey slamming the ball into goal after Brown had saved from the boot of Lewis. Lurking dangerously in the open spaces, slim-Jim was a constant danger to Wanderers.

The big-shot of Dennis Atkins came into play as soon as the second half started but it was John Beck, pinching the Atkins thunder, who inspired the move which led to the award of Wycombe's penalty.

Paul Bates, ex-penalty King, was reappointed as spot-kick taker—he is the third Wanderer to try this season and Paul sent a majestic drive past McGuire.

A fine goal from the head of Gerald Free made the points safe for Wycombe. He took an Atkins centre in his stride and kept the ball down with surprising ease.

Retaining a remarkable pace in the tiring heat, both teams kept up their dogfight until the final whistle. After winning this duel, Wycombe deserve to be on top.